

services, and that is exactly the situation Democrats created. They sent too many Federal dollars into the economy, and the economy overheated as a result.

Since Democrats passed their so-called American Rescue Plan, inflation has gone up and up again. In November, inflation hit its highest level in nearly 40 years—40 years—and American families are dealing with the consequences: spikes in food prices, rent prices, utility prices, used car and truck prices, propane, kerosene, and firewood prices, and the list goes on. Inflation is so bad that despite wage growth in 2021, Americans saw a de facto pay cut.

You would think that the economic pain Americans are experiencing would be giving Democrats pause, but in fact, despite massive inflation, Democrats have been trying to double down on the reckless spending strategy that helped cause so much inflation in the first place. Fortunately, they have so far been unable to summon a majority in the Senate to support their latest reckless spending plan, but their unconcern with the dangerous economic consequences of their proposed new spending spree is deeply troubling.

I wish I could say that our inflation crisis was the only Democratic disaster to come out of 2021, but that wouldn't be true. Democrats have also presided over a massive crisis at our southern border—a crisis that Democrats are apparently completely content to ignore. The illegal migration across our southern border picked up in the wake of the President's inauguration and reached stratospheric levels in 2021.

The crisis shows no signs of abating. In November, the latest month for which we have statistics, Customs and Border Protection encountered 173,620 people attempting to cross our southern border illegally. That is well over double the number who tried to cross illegally in November of 2020 and more than four times the number who attempted to cross in November of 2019. But you would never know it from listening to the President or congressional Democrats. It has become very clear that the President doesn't care about what is happening at our southern border despite the very real security and humanitarian crisis that this massive wave of illegal immigration represents.

But our ongoing inflation and border disasters still don't represent the total of Democrats' 2021 failures. There was also the President's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The President's arbitrary, chaotic withdrawal was a real low point for our country. Thirteen of our military men and women died in a terrorist attack during the evacuation of Kabul. We abandoned thousands of individuals who had worked with us in Afghanistan and whom we had promised to protect. They are bracing for life under the brutal control of the Taliban, if they haven't been forced into hiding or met

an even more grim fate. The President also left behind hundreds of American citizens, and the latest report suggests that some of them may still be trying to find a way out of the country.

Meanwhile, the President, who was supposed to restore our standing on the world stage, left our allies wondering if our word could be relied on.

Most of all, the President's disastrous withdrawal has left our country in a more precarious national security position. Afghanistan is well on its way to once again becoming a terrorist haven. But, as with our border crisis, the dangers of our current Afghanistan situation barely seem to register on the President's radar.

I could go on and talk about how the President, who promised to be a President for all Americans, has instead been a President for the far-left wing of the Democratic Party. I could talk about how congressional Democrats, despite holding a razor-thin majority in Congress, have governed in a relentlessly partisan and extreme manner, attempting to force through far-left legislation, including a Federal takeover of election law and perhaps the most radical abortion legislation ever considered in Congress. I could talk about how Democrats are even now plotting to overturn a decades-old Senate rule in an attempt to force their partisan priorities through the Senate. But I will stop this discussion here.

Thanks to Democrats' disasters, 2021 was a very rough year for the country. I would love to think that Democratic governance in 2022 would be better, that Democrats would get serious about inflation, abandon their plans for another reckless spending spree, address our border crisis, and commit to bipartisanship, but given the way things have been going, I am not getting my hopes up.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, before I close, I want to take a moment to comment on the situation in Ukraine.

Tensions remain dangerously high as Russia has amassed a reported 100,000 troops on Ukraine's border. This, of course, is just the latest aggressive move by Russia, which already illegally annexed Crimea in 2014 and has been supporting separatist forces in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine.

It may have been overlooked during the busy holiday season, but I would like to note for the record a bipartisan, bicameral virtual meeting that occurred on the morning of Christmas Eve with Ukrainian President Zelensky. I participated in this meeting, which enabled us to discuss the current security situation directly with President Zelensky.

We discussed the importance of the more than \$2½ billion in security assistance the United States has provided since 2014, including \$300 million in the latest National Defense Authorization Act. But given the urgency of the situation, the Biden administration must consider additional emergency assist-

ance at this critical time, and security assistance must also be backed by strong sanctions to deter any further Russian advances.

Unfortunately, President Biden has already given Russia a pass on one of Vladimir Putin's top priorities: the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. I have spoken before about the European security risk and economic harm to Ukraine that will be caused by Nord Stream 2. Yet President Biden has not enforced sanctions related to the pipeline—mandatory sanctions, I might add—that are required by law.

Per an agreement made prior to the Christmas break, the Senate will soon have a vote on these sanctions, and the message to Russia and President Putin must be clear: Don't interfere with the aspirations of Ukraine, and let Ukraine determine its future by the will of its people.

This is not a case of the United States and NATO looking to push east; this is a former Soviet state seeking to cast off Russia's grip, assert its sovereignty, and, of its own accord, align itself with the ideals of freedom and embrace peace and prosperity as a free and independent nation.

The United States should stand with Ukraine and against Russia's aggression.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 11:58 a.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BLUMENTHAL).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, a year ago, there was an attempted overthrow of American democracy right here in this building. You know, we spend so much time here arguing about things that are unknowable—about the future, about our ideology, about opinions—that we have become accustomed to treating floor speeches in the Senate as not primarily about facts.

But I was here. And by "I was here," I don't mean I was here in the Capitol. I mean, I was right here at this desk. And so no one needs to characterize it